

VZCZCXYZ0000  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGL #1002/01 2981618  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 251618Z OCT 06  
FM AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8625  
INFO RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 9701  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 3321  
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 2905  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ 0945

UNCLAS GUAYAQUIL 001002

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE, SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: GUAYAQUIL: NOBOA AND PRIAN WIN BIG, SOCIAL CHRISTIAN'S TAKE  
A HIT

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Conservative, populist presidential candidate Alvaro Noboa (PRIAN) carried Guayas province in the first round elections with 36 percent of the vote, in line with the disproportionate strength he showed in all three coastal provinces. The Guayaquil based Social Christian Party (PSC) took a hit in its coastal stronghold. While Presidential candidate Cynthia Viteri's strong third place finish accounted for a big chunk of her national vote tally, but PRIAN soundly displaced the PSC as the leading party in the province. The PSC party is under pressure to renovate, as party boss Leon Febres Cordero faces recrimination from younger leaders. The Christian Democratic Union (UDC) is aggressively wooing disenchanted PSC politicians. However, in the near term we expect that the wily PSC leadership will be able to work with Noboa to preserve enough PSC perquisites to keep the party from imploding. Guayaquil's economic and political elite are rallying around Noboa, although they recognize his political and personal flaws. End Summary.

#### Background

-----

¶2. (U) Representing 25 percent of the national electorate, Guayas province has always played a strategic role in national elections. Noboa dominated the 2002 second round presidential elections in Guayas, securing 67 percent of the votes in this pro-business part of the country.

#### First Round Blow to the PSC

-----

¶3. (U) In the first round of presidential voting on October 15, Noboa easily carried Guayas province with 36 percent of the vote (up from 24 percent in the 2002 first round) compared to almost 27 percent nationally. Correa and Viteri garnered 17 percent and 16 percent, respectively. The PSC's tally was a full ten percent lower than its 2002 tally, when the PSC won 26 percent of the Guayas first round vote.

¶4. (SBU) On election night, Consulate election observers participating in the OAS observation mission gathered a sample of almost 10,000 votes from five different voting locations around Guayaquil. The sample confirmed the Noboa victory immediately after the close of the polls, prior to the crash of the national electoral tribunal's contracted preliminary vote count.

¶5. (SBU) Viteri's gender apparently played a role in the election. In our sample, 24 percent of female voters in Guayas voted for Viteri, while only 18 percent of male voters sided with her. No other candidate's votes were heavily divided by the gender of the voter. Whether her gender gained her women's votes or just lost her men's votes isn't entirely clear, but anecdotally we hear that Viteri's hard luck story was inspirational to working class women.

#### Social Christian Party floundering

-----

¶6. (SBU) Long the dominant force in Guayaquil, the PSC scored a weak second place to PRIAN. Weeks prior to the election, we reported that the PSC was providing only modest support for Viteri while Febres Cordero focused on the congressional races. That strategy appears to have failed. With 78 percent of the congressional vote counted in Guayas, PRIAN has 37 percent of the votes. The PSC is currently showing only 24 percent. Voters can vote both party slate and for individuals. On the individual side, Noboa's wife Annabella Azin Arce leads the field, with exiled former president Bucaram's Partido Roldisista Ecuatoriano (PRE) candidates holding second and third places. Febres Cordero is in fourth place. Guayas holds 18 of the 100 congressional seats.

¶7. (SBU) Many Guayaquilenos we speak with are quietly satisfied with the PSC's poor showing and hope that it marks Febres Cordero's comeuppance. It is clear that the PSC is divided and many younger leaders are frustrated. On election day, PSC leaders gathered at the home of Leon Febres Cordero--presidential candidate Viteri stayed at home with family and confidants to watch the election results. In contrast with Correa and Noboa's very visible supporters, PSC representatives were largely absent from the polls on election day. We have also heard that the Christian Democratic Union Party (UDC) is trying to lure popular Guayaquil mayor Jaime Nebot and others away from the PSC by offering its political base in the highlands region. In a recent conversation with the Consul General, Nebot was characteristically circumspect about his own political future. He made a point of praising Viteri's campaign and her post-electoral "dignity," a common refrain here, where Viteri's standing has risen. Most are blaming the party rather than Viteri for her poor showing.

Comment

-----  
¶8. (SBU) Noboa, his wife and all of his inner circle hail from

Guayaquil, and we expect him to easily win Guayas province with the majority of the PSC vote going to him in the second round. Noboa values loyalty and delegates poorly, so a Noboa cabinet would probably be made up of high level Noboa employees--perhaps from some of his overseas operations--as well as some old-school PSC members. The political and economic elite from the coast are relieved by Noboa's first round win and are confident - perhaps overly so - that he will defeat Correa in the second round. Although they are familiar with Noboa's weaknesses, they will provide strong support in the coming weeks in an all-out effort to beat Correa.

Griffiths